Work-related murders are not accidental, destiny, nor natural; they are avoidable!

In our law, the scope of the definition of work-related accident and work-related disease is quite limited. The reason behind that is deaths, injuries, disabilities and diseases are conceived based simply on the compensation law, which would result in less number of work-related accidents and work-related diseases considered within the idea of “compensation,” and thus less cost to the bosses. Same goes with the penal law as well.

On the other hand, our perspective is integral. We, as WHSA do record incidents of worker deaths as many as we can identify. Our criteria for those records are as follows:

1- Why do we use the concept of “worker health” instead of “work health”? In our law the concept of “work health” is preferred. However, this concept refers to an approach aiming at the health of the work, in other words the efficiency and profitability of the premises. However, workers’ health comes first, not financial interests of any kind, nor growth objectives. That is why labourers should use the concept of “worker health.”

2- Why do we have to say “work-related murder” or in short “work murder” instead of “work accident”? The common ground of our Assembly is the idea that all work-related accidents are avoidable. Basic consequence of the idea that all work-related accidents are avoidable, is to be able to define what we experience as capitalist “work-related murders” or as in Turkey shortly called “work murders” instead of work-related “accidents”, “destiny” or “natural”…

3- Who should be within the scope of the concept of “work-related murder”? According to the October 2015 data of the Turkish Statistical Institute, out of over 58 million working age population, the workforce consists of 30 million and 3 thousand people, and the rate of men is 71.9% whereas of women is 31.8%. The rate of people working out of the social security system is 33.6%. On the other hand, 20.4% of the employees are in the agriculture sector, 20% in the industry, 7.6% in the construction, and 52% at the service sectors.

Based on these facts, we should;

a) Consider all worker/employee deaths (in or out of the social security system); in or out of the workplace; while working, travelling to/from workplace (with his/her means, or shuttles provided by the workplace), accommodating, eating etc, in other words “in the entirety of the work processes” as work-related murders.

b) Take domestic worker, security worker, shop-keeper, farmer, public employee, and non-Turkish citizen worker deaths as work-related murders as well.

c) In our country, deaths of many workers working out of the social security system and of some in the system are not recorded. Therefore, it can be stated that the number of worker deaths are way bigger than the data given by the Social Security Institution (SGK), governmental organization in Turkey.

4- Not 98%, but 100% of the work-related murders can be avoided. “98% can be avoided, but 2% is unavoidable”: That is the discourse even the labour movement appropriates. The origin of this discourse goes back to 1932. In his “domino model” Heinrich described the processes causing accidents as linear processes. He assumed social environment/inherited characteristics, human error, unsecure behaviours, mechanical and physical hazards, accidents and injuries as domino pieces affecting each other. Leading characteristic of this model is “the human error” factor being at the centre. Heinrich assessed 75.000
compensation/insurance claims, and concluded that 88% of those accidents were based on unsecure behaviour by individuals, 10% were originated from mechanical and physical conditions, and 2% were unavoidable.

Then the following questions come to mind: Who hears the compensation/insurance cases? How do decision making processes operate? Isn’t the law being interpreted based on the interests of the sovereign class? Who write the accident reports up, based on which perspective? In a changing society, technology, information, organization, societal values are all bound to change as well. However, when it comes to avoid work-related murders, majority of experts and operators still believe in the domino model. A variety of models with different scopes have been proposed after the domino model, causes lying behind workplace deaths and injuries have been elaborated, and several theories based on sound scientific bases have been developed. Common ground of those theories is taking the production process as a system, and considering this system as a subsystem of the societal system.

At least 1970 workers are murdered in 2016!

What we experienced in 2016 was a work-murders-regime in which the workers were constantly and brutally murdered. The conditions of the workers get worse and worse, but it is hard for them to fight back because they are threatened by losing their jobs.

We need to look at the current presidential referendum process and regime debates in Turkey in the light of this fact. Workers are made to pay for the deepening economic and social problems, and the wrong steps in domestic and foreign policy, and in order to prevent possible reactions, the administrative power has to be centralized.

In the last 6 years we have built our information and solidarity network about work related murders, took steps in some cities and produced an awareness all together. But it is not enough.

Based on what we could monitor from print press, visual and digital media, and the information we received from labour and professional organisations, and the victims’ relatives, and under the light of data updated every day, work-related murders in 2016 are as follows by months:

In January at least 119,
In February at least 144,
In March at least 160,
In April at least 172,
In May at least 127,
In June at least 210,
In July at least 176,
In August at least 206,
In September at least 150,
In October at least 169,
In November at least 196,
And in December at least 141 workers lost their lives...

At least 1970 workers are murdered in 2016!
There is an important point in the graph: We've shown the work related murders before the date of declaration of state of emergency, July the 21th with blue color, and after that to the end of the year with red. The real situation is obvious: Workers' health and work safety conditions were already bad, but became worse. After the declaration of state of emergency work murders have increased by 9%.

That's why we say “End the state of emergency immediately!”

In 2013 at least 1235 workers died
In 2014 at least 1886 workers died
In 2015 at least 1730 workers died
And in 2016 at least 1970 workers died...

In 2014 in addition to lots of mass murders we had the biggest worker massacre in our history, Soma massacre and 1886 workers were dead. Last year we had 1730 work murders without Soma. This year 1970 workers are murdered, so it shows that the solution cannot be reached only by new laws etc., but by removing the barriers in front of the workers' organizations. Otherwise workers' health shows a full emergency alert situation!

In 2016, the distribution of work murders by types of employment is as follows: among 1970 labourers who lost their lives in 2016, 1682 of them are wage earners in private & public sectors, and 288 of them are independent workers working on his/her own behalf, 210 being farmers/small land owners and 78 being merchants.
Although many work-related murders take place in trade/office, municipality, mining, metal, energy, food, security and tourism sectors, “the three usual suspects” are always there: Construction, agriculture and transportation sectors…

Work-related murders are clustered in sectors where seasonal work, poor work conditions (no union, no organization, no job security) are prevalent.

During the reign of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) as a result of the “mad projects”, number of deaths of the construction workers has increased. Workers are murdered in huge projects such as urban transformation, construction of 3rd bridge on the Bosphorus, and the 3rd airport in Istanbul, huge shopping malls, residences and dam constructions etc. while these projects destroy urban texture and the nature irreversibly.

Parallel to the destruction of the agriculture, especially during summer when the weather is hot, there is a peak in number of work-related murders in this sector. Number of deaths of seasonal agriculture workers, farmers, shepherds, forestry workers and fishermen categorized under this sector, all increase. Among seasonal agriculture workers especially nomads, in other words ones travelling from city to city depending on the harvest time of the product, health and security problems skyrocket especially in their transport and accommodation. Whereas the farmers are in the grip of high taxes, abolition of subventions, quotas, increase in incoming product prices and new laws…

Transportation and logistics sectors are growing parallel to the economic growth, which leads to the work-related murders of long distance drivers. Number of lorry, truck, shuttle, commercial bus, motor courier, cargo and taxi driver deaths are also increasing. Main causes of work-related murders are long work hours (14 to 16 hours), lack of routine maintenance of the vehicles, and poor road conditions…

According to our data in 2016, ¾ of all work murders happened in six sectors:
422 workers in construction and road sectors;
389 workers in agriculture and forestry sectors;
265 workers in transportation sector;
124 workers in trade and office sectors;
109 workers in municipality and public works sector;
96 workers in metal sector lost their lives.

And the other sectors:
76 workers in defence and security sectors;
74 workers in mining sector;
56 workers in tourism and entertainment sectors;
45 workers in textile and leather sectors;
45 workers in energy sector;
43 workers in food and sugar sectors;
38 workers in health and social services sectors;
32 workers in cement, soil, glass sectors;
28 workers in petro-chemistry and rubber sectors;
23 workers in wood and paper sectors;
23 workers in ship, shipyard, marine, port sectors;
8 workers in media and journalism sectors;  
7 workers in banking, finance and insurance sectors;  
6 workers in communication sector;  
and 40 workers whose sectors remain unidentified in the light of the data at hand have lost their lives.

In 2016, 110 female and 1860 male workers lost their lives.  

Majority of workers in construction, mining, transportation, metal and energy sectors where work-related murder cases take place frequently are men. That is the reason why majority of work-related murder victims we could identify are men. Women mainly work in agriculture, health, education, office, food, textile, aviation, municipality, and domestic sectors. Another factor is that work-related murders of women are either kept secret or they are made invisible since they work in informal economy. Nevertheless, we do know that we could reach only a fraction of women worker murder cases. Yet, we could identify more work-related murders of women than the Social Security Institution (SGK)...

Work-related murders happen independent of age, make no distinction between children or elders: We all die at work. Our children, our future is not protected. The young and adult age group is the one that gives most victims in our workforce to work-related murders. And we lose our elder people at an age when they actually should rest and convey their experiences to the young. In 2016, the distribution of work-related murders by age is as follows:

18 child workers of age 14 or younger;  
38 child/young adult workers of age 15-17;  
294 workers of age 18-27;  
998 workers of age 28-50;  
399 workers of age 51-64;  
77 workers of age 65 or older;  
and 146 workers whose ages could not been identified died in 2016...
Let's have a look on the work-related murders in 2016 that took place in 81 cities of Turkey:

According to our data, in 2016, the distribution of 1970 work-related murders by place of death is as follows:

262 workers died in Istanbul; 89 workers died in Kocaeli; 81 workers died in Bursa; 74 workers died in Izmir, 72 workers died in Ankara; 70 workers died in Antalya; 61 workers died in Konya; and 56 workers died in Manisa.

52 workers died in Aydın; 49 workers died in Adana; 45 workers died in Denizli; 43 workers died in Mersin, Samsun and Tekirdağ each; 39 workers died in Sakarya; 37 workers died in Kayseri and Muğla each; 35 workers died in Gaziantep.

27 workers died in Balıkesir; 26 workers died in Elazığ; 22 workers died in Çorum and Şanlıurfa each; 21 workers died in Eskişehir and Malatya each; 20 workers died in Diyarbakır, Erzurum, Zonguldak each and abroad; 19 workers died in Kastamonu, Mardin and Siirt each; 18 workers died in Ordu; 17 workers died in Düzce, Edirne, Niğde and Sivas each; 16 workers died in Bolu, Burdur, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş and Karabük each.

15 workers died in Çanakkale and Isparta each; 14 workers died in Afyon; 13 workers died in Aksaray, Giresun and Osmaniye each; 12 workers died in Tokat; 11 workers died in Diyarbakir, Ağrı, Erzincan, Karaman and Trabzon each; 10 workers died in Batman, Bilecik, Bingöl, Hakkari, Kütahya and Sinop each; 9 workers died in Bartın, Kırşehir and Kilis each; 8 workers died in Kırklareli and Rize each; 7 workers died in Bitlis, Nevşehir, Van and Yalova each; 6 workers died in Artvin, Kars, Tunceli, Uşak and Yozgat each; 5 workers died in Amasya, Gümüşhane and Şırnak each; 4 workers died in Çankırı; 3 workers died in Kırıkkale and Muş each; 2 workers died in Bayburt; and 1 worker died in Iğdır and Ardahan each.

Leading cause of death in work-related murders is traffic/shuttle accidents, which makes the driver deaths in transportation sector number one. In those incidents, seasonal agricultural workers are dashed to the road. In fact, the Ministry was supposed to secure the transportation of the workers based on the regulation titled “Improvement of Work and Social Lives of Seasonal Agricultural Workers” issued on March 24th 2010...
Another leading cause of death in work-related murders is falling from a high position. This happens most in constructions. However, a standard scaffolding, a proper security belt, side panels or simply a net can largely avoid falls. And then again the issue of cost comes to the picture...

Workers are crushed due to the fall of a heavy object, collapse or squeezing in the machinery. Collapses in constructions and mines; crashes under a tree or tractor; and squeezes in the machinery in metal and transportation sectors are frequent. Those can be avoided by taking simple precautions...

Other causes of death are thunderbolts, heart attacks, suicides, etc. Weather conditions are not taken seriously, leading to deaths due to a thunderbolt or an avalanche. In fact, they can be known beforehand based on weather casts, but no precautions are taken. Workers have heart attacks or brain haemorrhages due to overwork. They commit suicide because of pressure policies, unemployment or the debt grip...

According to our data, in 2016 the distribution of 1970 work-related murders by cause of death is as follows:

- 442 workers died due to traffic, shuttle accidents;
- 355 workers died due to collapses and crushes;
- 323 workers died due to falls;
- 217 workers died due to heart attack or brain haemorrhage;
- 159 workers died due to armed attack-shooting;
- 91 workers died due to electric shocks;
- 90 workers died by suicide;
- 73 workers died due to poisoning and suffocation;
- 53 workers died due to explosions and burns;
- 49 workers died due to fall or hit of an object;
- 19 workers died due to cuts and amputations;
- And 99 workers died due to other reasons.

We took deaths caused by work-related diseases under the category of “other causes” in our report, because our data is very limited in that category. According to our data, in 2016, out of 1970 workers who lost their lives only 15 died due to a work-related disease, which corresponds to 0.76%. And whether 15 deaths due to Crimean congo haemorrhagic fever, malaria, bee sting, respiratory and digestive disorders are officially considered work-related disease or not is not certain.

A comparison of ILO estimates and SGK data points to the lack of a diagnosis system for work-related diseases. The structure of the Turkish health system does not allow the medical diagnosis of work-related diseases, whereas characteristics of the working conditions impede determination of work-related diseases. A worker should apply to numerous hospitals and public institutions in order to get a work-related disease diagnosis, and wait years to get a result. In addition to that, in most cases getting a diagnosis means that the person should be ready to face the threat of unemployment.

Work-related and occupational diseases, like work-related murders, can totally be avoided in a labour process where all phases of the “work” are organized based on a human centred approach. In the struggle against work-related diseases, it is possible to enable a diagnosis system in the present structure, to get improvements in the law and to develop occupational rehabilitation after the diagnosis only by raising the claims of the labour movement. A labour struggle that puts “threat” at the centre, that fights to avoid it, and that makes organized action as a method is a must to avoid work-related diseases.

**Overworking, working excessively and intensively causes serious health problems.**

*In 2016, at least 217 workers lost their lives in Turkey by heart attack or stroke!*  
*In memory of Cenk Yavaş, M.D.*

He was a specialist in the anesthesiology and reanimation department of a private hospital in Sancaktepe, Istanbul. He was working alone for 3 months, because the other specialist wasn’t working there anymore. He was suffering from flu, exhaustion and stomach ache for one month. But he continued to work, and had no heart problems before. In his last month he participated and attended in 176 surgeries, and worked 60 hours a week and was on duty 8 times a month.

On Friday, February the 5th of 2016, as he was anesthetizing his third patient, he felt faint. He thought that this was his usual stomach ache and went to his room, but then he suddenly fell to the ground in front of his colleagues.
His heart stopped at the age of 39.

There has been 217 work murders in 2016, probably caused by Karōshi, the overwork death.

In order to avoid a confusion, we have to state first how we tackle the problem. According to Turkish law, every death took place in the workplace, whatever the reason is within the scope of “work murder”. But the overwork deaths, deaths caused because of excessive and intensive working have not been examined, yet. We also have included all deaths related to heart attacks or strokes into our report. However we don't know for sure if all these deaths are karōshi, including Cenk Yavaş, M.D.’s one. Every worker's death must be examined separately, too. So, we evaluate 217 worker deaths we identified as “possible karōshi”s. But we have to remark that many worker deaths are called “ecel”, meaning “fate” in Turkish and we are left uninformed in most cases. So, we must keep in mind that there are more deaths than we think. According to our data, in 2013, at least 48 workers, in 2014, at least 121 workers, in 2015, at least 155 workers, and in 2016, at least 217 workers died in Turkey by heart attack or stroke.

In 4 years, we see an upward trend in “possible karōshi” cases.

217 “possible karōshi” cases are distributed by sectors as we mostly encounter them in agriculture, transportation, trade & office, defence & security, construction & roads, health & social services, tourism & entertainment, municipality & public works, food and metal sectors.
More than half of 217 worker deaths which are “possible karōshi” are to be seen at the age of 51 and under.

Mobbing, debt grip, unemployment…
In 2016, at least 90 workers committed suicide!

Primary school teaching department alumni M.E. (we couldn't identify his full name) who lives in Diyarbakır committed suicide jumping from the 6th floor on February the 10th of 2016, after he learned that he was not among 30 thousand candidates appointed to a teaching position in public sector. Because the number of deaths of candidates who had not been appointed to a teaching position has reached 40, the issue has been held on February the 12th in the Turkish parliament at the committee on planning and budget. Minister of education Nabi Avcı answered the questions and made “a statement worth to pass into history” according to his own words:

“Now, a dramatic thing to say, but these candidate teachers we have been talking about, it is often said that 'he or she committed suicide because s/he could not be appointed' etc. I don't know what the technical term is in medicine and I hesitate to say, but there is a syndrome called “conspicuous suicide attempt”. Those attempts are conspicuous in the sense that they don't wanna do this in fact, but in order to be under the spotlights or to make their wishes to happen, these attempts do happen. That's what the medical experts told to me. So these news must not be inspiring.”

As a result of the neoliberal capitalist policies during the reign of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) with the growing precarization of public teachers, an important number of teachers have not been appointed to their jobs by the government although they have already graduated from their colleges. The education has been a commodity by itself bought and sold including the teachers’ labour force.

On the other hand these suicides happen not only among teachers. Among bank workers, security workers, farmers, construction workers..., a lot of suicides happened last year and do happen every year. However about what they call “conspicuous suicide attempts” and what we call work-related murders, there is not one single theoretical study or written research in Turkey, let alone a practical struggle. Let’s try to see the reasons behind this phenomenon.

Why do the workers commit suicide?
Suicides due to overwork have first been diagnosed in Japan in the second half of ’80’s and conceptualised as karojisatsu. Karojisatsu is the suicide attempt because of the overwork, as the worker loses his/her judgment and gets depressed. In order to be related to overwork, the working conditions for the worker must have one or more properties below before the suicide attempt:

a) Having worked 10 to 16 hours a day,
b) Having worked 4 weeks in a row above 65 hours a week,
c) Having worked 8 weeks in a row above 60 hours a week.

Work related suicides can be avoided. But first, these deaths must be accepted as work related murders. And to achieve this, these suicides need to be related to working conditions and overwork. The difficulties seen here prevents the diagnosis ve hides the scope of problem.

A Karojisatsu Case: Work related suicides have been, after a long struggle, legally approved as work related murders in Japan. A worker in Dentsu company committed suicide in August 1991 after long and intensive
hours of work and the resulting mental, physical and social exhaustion. At the end of the legal case his family filed against the company, the relationship between long hours of work and suicide has been legally accepted by Japanese courts.

Not specific to one and only country: The reason behind the suicides is precariatisation

Analysing the data at hand about the work related suicides; in Japan, the first country where suicides due to overwork are first seen and officialised, the rate of karōjisatsu was 12% in 1999, but increased to 33.7% in 2001. This means a big increase and it is estimated that every year 5000 thousand people commit suicide due to overwork.

Some of the suicides due to overwork have also been legally recognised as work-murder in France, Australia and England. A study made in Australia in 2002 has shown that in 109 suicides between 1989-2000, work conditions is major factor, indeed. In France, between the years 2008-2010, 34 workers at France Telekom have committed suicides one after the other, tout de suite. In China, in Foxconn factory where iPod, iPhone and iPad is produced, work related suicides have increased so much that Apple gets the workers sign a written statement which promises “I will not commit suicide and take care of myself”. These samples are just the tip of the iceberg.

Now, let's have a look at workers' suicides in Turkey in terms of sectors, reasons etc.

[Graph showing worker deaths by suicide from 2013 to 2016]

In order to avoid a confusion, we have to state first how we tackle the problem. According to Turkish law, very suicide that took place in the workplace, whatever the reason, is within the scope of “work murder”. However, currently, there is not a single legal definition for work related suicide. We have included all the deaths that took place in workplace (whether related to work or not) and the ones outside the workplace which are only work related into our report. And generally we used the term “workplace suicides”. (Otherwise, at home and in workplaces hundreds of workers do commit suicides every year, but what we could identify was only a small proportion of them.) According to our data;

in 2013, at least 15 workers,
in 2014, at least 25 workers,
in 2015, at least 59 workers,
and in 2016, at least 90 workers in Turkey died by suicide inside the workplace (if outside, then related to work).

Even if we take into account that the data we have collected in the past two years is high partly because of the increasing awareness of the subject, there is definitely an increase in workplace suicides parallel to the growing precariatization.
Distribution of 90 workers who committed suicide by types of employment is as follows:

35 workers and 14 public employees, 49 wage employees in total;
29 merchants and 4 farmers, in total 33 independent workers working on his/her own behalf committed suicide in 2016.
8 unemployed workers, including unemployed teachers who committed suicide last year.

Workers who committed suicide in 2016 were mostly working in trade & office, defence & security, construction, tourism, agriculture, municipality, metal and transportation sectors.

The reasons behind the workplace suicides in 2016 can be separated in 5 categories. According to this:

23 workers due to debts,
10 workers due to mobbing,
8 workers due to unemployment,
17 workers due to (as echoed in the press) personal reasons committed suicide in 2016.
And 32 workers more have committed suicide, too, but we don't know the reason behind them due to lack of information.

At least 56 child workers died in 2016
Child labour should be banned...

Nazım Hikmet wrote, "let's give the world to the children, like a huge apple like a warm loaf of bread, at least for one day let them have enough..." That's right; children are the most affected by poverty, children take the hardest blow in wars, children are wretched under the worst working conditions...

There are millions of child workers in our country. Half of them work in agriculture, and the other half in industrial and service sectors.

The state does not even respect its own laws as children are left unprotected at work, employed in sectors where child labour is banned, and employed under the age of 15. There is not any study regarding child worker health, and the statements regarding child worker deaths are contradictory. For example, in reply to a parliamentary question, the former Minister of Labour Faruk Çelik stated that 21 children died while working in 2013, and 16 children in 2014, and that this figure was 127 between 2002-2014.

At least
59 child workers died in 2013,
54 child workers died in 2014,
63 child workers died in 2015, and
56 child workers died in 2016...

The state is either incognizant of the child labour conditions or simply dishonest, or both. As WHSA, we announce that at least 232 child workers died over the past four years.

European Union is a collaborator of the state policies regarding child labour. On the one hand, EU officials praise the government's efforts to improve the conditions of child labour. EU promotes a social image by transferring millions of Euros to the associations that are established by its own hand. On the other hand, it is the EU-imposed policies resulting in the decline of agriculture and higher industrial dependence that contributed to the escalation of child labour in Turkey. On top of that, following the Refugee Readmission Agreement between EU and Turkey, immigrant children were quickly thrown into the clutches of agriculture and industry.

An aspect to be underlined regarding migrant child labour is that there was no finding on migrant child worker death in 2013; however, five Syrian immigrant children were killed in work-related murders in 2014, twelve Syrian children in 2015, and twenty-four immigrant children, including 6 Syrian and 1 Afghan, in 2016. Immigrant children fell victim to 12,5% of overall child worker murders. This situation is a direct reflection of the above-mentioned Turkey-EU policies.
Almost half of child worker deaths occurred in agriculture. One aspect of this situation is about the decline of agriculture and family labour. Another aspect is related to seasonal labour. Children, along with women, constitute the backbone of seasonal labour, and “there would be no seasonal labour if you took out children”.

There is a considerable number of child workers in metal, construction, accommodation, public works, trade, food, and textile sectors. Child workers are employed permanently, in summer, or as apprentices and interns, i.e. in line with the “vocational high schools is a national matter” principle of the capital. Under the 4+4+4 education system, children are either encouraged to go to the vocational high schools to supply cheap technical staff to the capital, or pushed out of education to join unskilled labour force. Being pushed out of education makes the lives of children even more difficult. According to the 2013 report of Turkish Statistical Institution (TÜİK), children who do not go to school actually work for 54,3 hours per week, above the average of Turkey. One third of them do not have meals at work, while 36% of them work without weekly leave, and 89% without annual leave. As WHSA, we have found that they are more likely to fall victim to work-related murders.

Among children who die in work-related murders, 12.5% are girls/women. This is twice as high as the ratio of female worker deaths to overall work-related murders.

As a characteristic of “primitive accumulation” period, child labour begins at a very young age in Turkey. Child worker deaths include findings of children as young as 6 years of age. Despite the fact that children at and under the age of 14 are not allowed to be employed in Turkey, there are 18 child worker deaths at this age category, which is a stark indication of child labour in Turkey.

At least 476 pensioners / workers at the age of retirement died in 2016 Increasing numbers of “pensioners / workers at the age of retirement” are killed in work-related murders...

The public institutions have not documented older worker deaths. However, we hear every day of the news reports of death of older workers who had to work until retirement or waiting for the age of retirement, or who could not be entitled to retirement due to absence or irregularity of social security.
Being aware of these facts, WHSA argues that a specific age of retirement should be identified for each sector, occupation, gender, and person. For the sake of “generalization”, however, we have identified 50 as the age of retirement when illnesses and exhaustion tend to emerge in Turkish society. (It should be discussed in a different paper whether/how pensioners/older people should be excluded/included in production.)

The number of deaths among "pensioners/workers at the age of retirement" is increasing year by year. It has not been any different in 2016. The ratio of “older” worker deaths to overall work-related murders is 24%, which is a reflection of the current state of the social security system...

As for the types of employment, 1/3 of “older” worker deaths occur among farmers and tradesmen, and 2/3 occur among workers and civil servants. Types of employment are interchangeable. There are farmers who could not earn a living on farming and joined the ranks of the workers, and there are workers who could not get by on pension and engaged in trades...

Due to poverty and practical elimination of retirement rights through legal regulations, older workers were pushed to precarious employment and became an important source of the precariat pool.

Older workers are mainly employed in agriculture, primarily as small landowners/farmers, secondly as seasonal agricultural labour. Though for different reasons, both of these ways raise the main health concerns of not having social security and death at work.

The second main areas of employment for older workers are construction and transportation. It is difficult to achieve retirement in these sectors due to absence or irregularity of social security. On the other hand, older workers who retired/could not retire in other professions tend to work in these sectors due to the opportunity of unskilled labour employment.

Older workers often appear to be working as tradesmen. In this line of work based upon a small amount of capital, Social Security Support Contribution debts constitute an important problem in access to healthcare services.
We had mentioned at the beginning of our report that the age of retirement is increased gradually to become 65 years of age. However, 1/6 of older workers who were killed in work-related murders were at and above the age of 65. That is to say, the extent of poverty and exploitation does not allow people to retire in our country...

Our Right to Retirement...
Here are some questions to be asked in determining retirement in our country:

1. Is there access to fee and health in old age?
2. What is the measure of increasing life expectancy? Is not the nature of the work a determinant?
3. What is the status of education, occupation (industrial workers, especially mine workers are subject to highest physical exhaustion), income and assets (house ownership, difference in pensions, presence of additional income)?
4. Are there any diseases (heart, lungs, eyes, hypertension, diabetics, prostate)?
5. What is the impact of habits such as smoking and drinking?
6. Is there access to regular health check-up? What is the social and psychological situation like? Is there age-related weakening of reflexes and mental functioning? Is there access to adequate resting, vacation, nutrition, and accommodation?
7. What is the impact of transportation and urban life?
8. Is it possible to consider the conditions of employers and executive employees same as workers?

Workers have a right to retire after a certain period of working. It should be determined according to their sector, occupation, gender, and personal health status...

At least 110 female workers died in 2016

As a matter of gender perception in Turkey and the world, women and the concept of femininity are subjected to double exploitation in labour processes. However, these processes that are increasingly weighed upon women should not be considered as limited to the work space. Indeed, what is responsible for this is that in all social spaces, women are conceived of as “Minority of 51%” not due to their numbers but due to the masculine mentality, and thus exposed to exploitation. The mentality that analyses what a woman must do with her body and gives her commands is the same as the force that tries to doubly exploit her in work spaces depending on this social positioning of women. Those who are vulnerable and dispensable socially may also encounter similar oppressive forces in terms of class – the oppressed. Therefore, every issue of the woman problem that needs to be discussed and tackled should actually concern all of us due to its social significance. When we reveal the gender identity of our monthly work-related murders data, we intend to open a window to the issue from this perspective.

By following as much as we can and exposing this bitter picture where the exploitation of women results in death, we actually aim at seeing and showing the burden women take on and what is imposed by the system on us, labourers, through this double exploitation.
At least
103 female workers died in 2013,
131 female workers died in 2014,
120 female workers died in 2015,
and 110 female workers died in 2016.

When we track the gender roles associated with women in daily life, we can find many traces of them in labour processes. For example, women’s labour in housework and domestic care within the family is invisible labour. It is because they do not have working hours, because work and rest is intertwined as well as free time and work time, affection and labour, and because household relations are considered “natural” rather than societal. More importantly, this labour is unpaid. Exploitation of women takes a different form in “public” sphere due to this “natural” phenomenon. There is another huge area of work that somewhat bears the mark of invisible labour with very low payment and precarious jobs. Women constitute a great majority of those working in jobs forming the unregistered sector such as temporary agricultural work, unpaid family work, home-based production, temporary cleaning and care jobs. Based on “natural” abilities of women such as domestic work and care, and thus bearing the traces of invisible labour, these unregistered jobs performed either at home or in neighbour workstations stand somewhere in-between paid and unpaid labour, modern and familial ways of employment.

Agriculture & Forestry takes a large part (44%) in the female worker deaths by sector in 2016. Female workers mostly work as agricultural and seasonal workers. Workers are killed either by vehicles unsuited for the landscape or on the road due to poor conditions of transportation. Due to the “naturalness” and invisibility of domestic labour, female labour is regarded as complementary in the public sphere, which legitimizes cheap and unregistered female labour.

Public statements also give some insight as to the close link between invisible domestic labour of women and the status of female labour in work life. Feeling the need to make a statement on violence against women in 2015, Sare Davutoğlu had stated that when the words “Woman” and “Violence” are used together, it causes public indignation, which leads to escalation of violence. Right after this statement, which was problematic in gender terms, she had expressed her preference to define female worker deaths as “death of mothers” instead of “work-related murder”, thus surmising that it was a natural phenomenon. However, female deaths cannot be
merited even under the conception of “motherhood” attributed to women within the society, and it cannot be accepted for her to use it as an excuse to leave questions related to worker deaths unanswered.

Yes, women die, women are killed. Positioned in this way due to the social gender regime in this country, women are employed as cheap and unregistered labour in their daily lives and in labour processes, and their labour is discarded as just a “contribution to the household”.

Therefore, we are underlining this gender-based exploitation aspect of work-related murders. “Murders of women and work-related deaths are political!”

**Recent policies**

Recently, one of the most controversial issues is the policy of “Hired Labour”. Unfortunately, it is not difficult to anticipate an escalation of exploitation of female workers whose employment conditions are already poor, flexible, and precarious:

1- Majority of young women are employed in small and medium sized enterprises in Turkey. With the regulation of hired labour, small-sized enterprises with 10 or fewer employees can employ up to 5 temporary workers. This way, the state favours small-sized enterprises while dooming their female employees to low-paid, precarious jobs without union and retirement rights.

2- Private Employment Agencies are allowed to establish temporary employment relations in seasonal agricultural works, cleaning works, care of sick and elderly people, i.e. the areas of female employment. The state leaves the future of a group of workers entirely to the hands of Private Employment Agencies.

3- Private Employment Agencies will replace informal subcontractors in seasonal works; domestic workers will be hired through Private Employment Agencies rather than through their personal networks. The competition among Private Employment Agencies will cause serious problems and losses both in salaries and in matters of workers' health and work safety.

4- Factories and large-sized enterprises will be allowed to hire workers twice, each for six months. The number of hired workers will not exceed ¼ of the permanent workers. Because regular and unionized employment is usually male labour in large-sized enterprises, this restriction in favour of workers will not be of much benefit to women.

5- When a woman prefers to work part-time due to pregnancy, Private Employment Agencies will be able to compensate for her remaining work with hired employees. It will both impose precarious employment and also compromise the vested right of maternity leave and many more rights that are still struggled for.

Owing to the social gender regime that operates via the conception of femininity in daily life, the capital's way out of the times of crisis is primarily built on female labour. Evidently, these current policies sustain capital accumulation while stirring up discrimination and sexism among female workers. It does not increase female employment, but rather legitimizes unemployment, low-paid work, and precarity. In societal terms, class differences are deepened further, and Turkey's middle class is also turned into precarized labour. These policies will lead to a class reality of futurelessness. Based on the precarious and futureless working conditions, we anticipate a likely increase in overall worker deaths, work-related injuries and occupational diseases as well as escalating exploitation of female workers as described above. Therefore, particularly in this period, every step towards ensuring workers' health and work safety is of vital importance to build a free and egalitarian life.

We must fight together if we die together in work-related murders in factories and fields...

At least 96 migrant workers died in 2016

The number of migrant workers is rapidly increasing in our country. As a reflection of this, the number of work-related murders of immigrants is escalating. In our country, there were solidarity endeavours regarding life-sustaining needs of immigrants; however, there was a gap in workers' health and work safety. To help fill this gap, we initiated regular reporting as of the beginning of the past year. The aim of this modest step was to address unionization and workers' health work safety problems of immigrants as they are now an important component of Turkish labour class.

We issued four separate reports on this subject in 2016, addressing
1- the fact that immigrants die at work as well as in the Aegean waters,
2- the need to place immigration debates in Turkey within an international perspective,
3- the bargaining with the European Union over immigrants,
4- the fact that immigrants are cheap labour to the bosses,
5- the likelihood that they will be regarded as a pool of voters by the government,
6- the centring of immigrant-related debates usually around Syria/Syrians,
7- the fact that unionization is not a "migrant worker policy",
8- the distant and detached attitude of Turkish labourers towards migrant workers due to various economic, social, and cultural reasons including fears of losing their jobs and jihadist attributes,
9- the need to develop a perspective of "joint organization, joint struggle" with migrant workers who constitute a significant part of work-related murders,
10- the need to review the examples of migrant workers around the world.

In these quarterly reports, we tried to address the hot topics of the relevant period.

![2013-2016 / Migrant worker deaths](image)

At least
22 migrant workers died in 2013,
53 migrant workers died in 2014,
67 migrant workers died in 2015, and
96 migrant workers died in 2016.

In other words, immigrants lose their lives not only in the Aegean Sea but also in the workplaces where they work for a pittance...

![2013-2016 / The ratio of migrant worker deaths to overall worker deaths](image)

The ratio of migrant worker deaths to overall worker deaths was 2% in 2013, and rose to 3% in 2014, 4% in 2015, and 5% in 2016. This piece of data alone shows the evident increase of migrant labour in our country. It reveals that migrants are a new component of the labour class in our country, suggesting the need for union movements to develop a perspective to organize migrant workers.
In the factories and the fields, work-related murders took lives of not only Turkish workers but also our worker brothers of mostly Syrian and also Afghan, Georgian, Ukrainian, Iranian, Iraqi, Uzbek, Russian... origin. When we were working shoulder to shoulder for the capital to earn more, we died one by one regardless of our nationalities. That is why we must fight together.

On the other hand, “Turkey is discussing an ‘international phenomenon of migration’ and the topic of discussion is ‘Syria / Syrians’”. At this point, though reluctantly, we also classified the deaths of migrant workers according to their nationality.

Among the migrant worker deaths;

- 61% are Syrian,
- 12% are Afghan,
- 5% are Georgian,
- 4% are Ukrainians,
- 3% are Iranian,
- 2% are Iraqis, Uzbek and Russian, each.

Other nationalities category of 9% consists of Azeri, Chinese, South Korean, Kyrgyz, Lithuanian, Pakistani, Serbian, Turkmen and Venezuelan immigrants.

This is consistent with our records we have been keeping since 2013...

As distinct from the past years, agriculture has been replaced by construction as the sector with the highest number of deaths. Migrant workers are employed in labour-intensive sectors precariously at sub-minimum rates or low daily wages.

Join the Union against Work-Related Murders... Resist, Worker! In Order To Survive...

We call for stepping up more in 2017 to publicise work-related murders across Turkey more, and to expand our struggle for measures on workers' health and work safety... To this end:
1- Workers’ participation is the prerequisite for prevention of work-related murders, and ensuring healthy and safe work. Workers can only achieve this by way of unionization. However, in our country, workers are fired due to union membership; the capital either rejects unions at the workplace or promotes the union that it wants. The state puts a further ban on the unions’ press statements, meetings, and strikes, i.e. the right of collective bargaining.

All kinds of pressure on the freedom of unionization should be eliminated!

2- Most of the workplaces do not have workers’ health and safety boards. In the workplaces that do have, the boards may not convene. Workers’ representatives cannot speak up at the boards. The representatives are dismissed when they speak for workers’ rights.

Worker health and work safety boards should be established at every workplace, and kept functional; at least half of their members should consist of workers, and dismissal of workers’ representatives should be banned!

3- Workers are arbitrarily called onto tasks outside of their job definition. Working hours reach 10-12 hours a day. They are not given overtime pays, rights to leave, etc. These conditions are especially hard on subcontracted workers, and now slavery practices like hired labour will make subcontracting look like the lesser evil.

End to subcontracting and hired labour! We want secure employment!

4- The bosses, bureaucrats, and politicians who are responsible for work-related murders are not prosecuted. Those who are prosecuted put the blame on FETO, like in the case of Soma, virtually mocking the workers. The courts do not impose punishment for work-related murders; the offenders are “released upon fines to be paid in 24 instalments”.

The bosses, bureaucrats, and politicians who are responsible for work-related murders should be prosecuted and punished!

These demands are the most basic rights of workers’ health and work safety. Our task is to persist on creating movements across the country for implementation of our demands…

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Workers' Health and Work Safety Assembly (Turkey) – WHSA

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